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7/7/22
Flowers

AN ADDRESS TO THE SOLDIERS OF THE SOUTHERN ARMIES.

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FELLOW-SOLDIERS! Bear with me, soldiers, while I explain the motives which prompt this address. It is natural that I should feel in you a deep interest. If you were only my *fellow-men*, bound to me by the tie of our common humanity, your welfare would concern me. Even a heathen has said, "I am a *man*; and nothing human do I count alien from me." But I may cite as a higher authority these words of the great Apostle to the Gentiles: "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and the unwise." We are children of the same Father who hath made of one blood all nations of men. We have been redeemed by one blood, the precious blood of the Lamb of God. You have undying souls, fallen indeed from the glory of that divine image in which man was created, but capable, through the atonement of Christ and the sanctification of the Spirit, of purification from all sin and adornment in the clear and lustrous robe of righteousness, white as the snow and brilliant as the sun.—Your bodies, too, though vile, mortal and corruptible now, have been included in the redemption by Christ Jesus, and may be made like unto his glorious body, when this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible incorruption.

For all these reasons I must cherish towards every one of you the tender and lively solicitude of a brother: for the love of Christ constraineth me. But you are nearer to me than fellow-men; you are my *fellow-citizens*, compatriots in that heroic struggle through which our young Republic is achieving a honored rank amid the free and independent nations of the earth. I cannot believe that the patriotic fire which warms my heart towards you, as gallant, generous sons of the South, is unworthy of my office as a minister of the gospel. With all the breadth of his world-embracing charity, Paul confessed a peculiar ardor and yearning tenderness of affection for the Jews, his kinsmen according to the flesh. For them he had "continual heaviness and sorrow in his heart." For them he cried out with mingled patriotism and piety, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." And shall I attempt to repress, or be ashamed to acknowledge, the profound solicitude and gushing sympathies of my inmost nature for my brethren of the Confederate States, dear to me by their characteristic qualities—by that genial fervor with which their hearts glow like the suns that warm their fruitful soil, thrice dear in this day of our trial, when we are bound into unity by the fellowship of common sufferings, welded together by the rude blows of calamity and in the blaze and burning heat of intense, absorbing love for our imperilled country—a flame in which all petty, sordid, selfish feelings that might at other times divide us are consumed? But you are more to me than fellow-citizens; you are the very flower of our population, our hope and pride, the youth and manhood of the land, on whom has devolved and by whom is borne the grand responsibility of defending at your own peril the liberties, the rights, the honor, the homes of your countrymen, all of worth that has been transmitted to us by our sires, all that is prized by freemen, all that we would bequeath to our children and children's children to the latest generation. On you is bent the eye of the country, kindling with hope and noble pride as it watches your deeds of daring and march of glory. Towards you is turned the ear of the country, listening with bated breath to catch the shouts of your triumph and the trumpet-notes of your fame. With you beats the heart of your country, swollen and throbbing with keenest sympathy for your hardships and dangers, but also

with lofty confidence in your fortitude and valor to hurl back the countless hordes of her invaders and shed on the earliest page of her history a lustre unsurpassed in ancient or in modern times. What Southron loves not the gallant soldier who strikes for our altars and firesides? His name shall be written in immortal story, and sung in immortal song. Nor can I, as a minister of Christ, forget that you maintain against the oppressor not only our civil, but also our religious privileges; you uphold Church and State. Wherever the foe possesses our soil the pulpit is silenced, the church shut, the altar desecrated, the minister arrested and loaded with insult.— Shall I not feel a special concern in your spiritual well-being, because you have generously surrendered for the time the advantages not only of home, but of the church amid whose institutions you have been reared, in order to secure the right of our people to worship God after the dictates of their own consciences, undisturbed by the insolent enemy who would thrust false doctrines and traitorous prayers into the throats of our preachers and the ears of their congregations?

The crowning consideration that moves me to this appeal is suggested in the title which I have placed at the head of this tract; I address you as my *fellow-soldiers*. The heart of the soldier warms towards his companion in arms, the partner of his privations and perils, also of the thrilling joy of his triumphs. I am a non-combatant, a chaplain preaching the peace of God and the warfare whose weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. I claim no share in the gratitude of these States and the admiration of all nations which you have earned by the heroic patience with which you have borne manifold hardships and the heroic courage by which you have triumphed over fearful odds on many fields, red with the precious blood of our slain, but rich in imperishable renown. Nevertheless, I too belong to the army. The relation which I sustain to the soldier has brought me into intimate acquaintance with his character, and so attuned my heart that its every chord vibrates in response to his joys and griefs. I have been with him in camp and on picket, in Northern Virginia and the Peninsula, in the heats of summer, the storms of autumn, the rigors of winter. I have trudged by his side on many a long and wearisome march, in advance and retreat, through mud and snow and sun. I have seen him in the hush and suspense before

battle, in the tempest of shot and shell, in the jubilant hour of victory and on the sad scene of the wounded and slain and freshly buried. I have been with him as he was borne bleeding and mutilated from the field of strife; I have sat by his side as he lay sick and comfortless in camp, or on his lonely couch in the hospital. I still count it an honor to follow his fortunes, and break to him the bread of eternal life. Will you not own me as a comrade, and listen to the message of love and entreaty which I bring to you as an humble ambassador of the Lord Jesus?

Perhaps there lurks in your mind a too common notion of the incompatibility of a soldier's life with the experience of piety. If so, I wish to disabuse you of this error. I write not so much of the professional or regular soldier, (though he may be a true christian,) far less of the oppressors of our country who wage a war unholy in its objects and methods, but of the men who have left their pleasant homes to defend against the ruthless foe our precious, God-given heritage. There is nothing in this service inconsistent with the strictest principles of the divine word. Abraham, the father of the faithful and friend of God, armed his trained servants, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen in number, smote the captors of Lot, and rescued him and his property. Moses, who communed with Jehovah on Sinai and received the law from his lips, led Israel to battle and triumph. David, the man after God's own heart, was a warrior-king, and in heart-stirring strains upon his holy harp blessed the Lord his strength, which taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight. Jesus marvelled at the strong faith of a Roman centurion, or captain of a hundred men, and bore witness: "Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Honorable mention is made in the Acts of the Apostles of another officer in the Roman army—"Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." An angel appeared to him, saying, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." To him first Peter was sent to announce the grand truth that God is no respecter of persons, but equally ready to accept and bless Jew and Gentile who fear him and work righteousness; and on him and those assembled at his house the Holy Ghost de-

scended. To speak of modern times, who has not read or heard of Col. Gardiner, Capt. Vicars and Gen. Havelock, of the British Army, famed equally for their intrepidity as soldiers and their profound piety? Our own Washington, the patriot, soldier, sage, bowed in holy reverence and trust before the Lord of lords. With devout pleasure I refer to our Confederate army; how many and how illustrious the names on its rolls that are also written in the book of life, honored of man and God! Gens. Lee, Bragg, Jackson, D. H. Hill, and a long list of distinguished officers, count it their loftiest privilege to be humble disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, and prove that experimental and practical religion is not unfavorable to the highest qualities of the soldier, and may be retained amid all the strife of war. True piety sanctions and fosters every manly, generous, brave and lovely sentiment. It has no favor for the cowardly, the sluggish, the sordid, the selfish. It teaches us to fear God, and not man; to risk and sacrifice all for right and duty. I have known many noble specimens of the christian soldier. I shall never cease to remember with admiration one of the earliest victims of this war, Major Carter Harrison, of the 11th Virginia. He was an earnest servant of Christ, modest, firm, unostentatious, zealous. He seized at once the hearts of the regiment by his many virtues, by his courtesy to all and his kind visits to the sick, to whom he bore a word not only of sympathy, but also of pious exhortation. On the lovely morning of July 18, 1861, as we awaited the advance of the enemy and the opening of our first battle, our conversation was on sacred themes. In a few hours he was mortally wounded, and until midnight endured untold agony; but in his soul was the peace of God, and all was patiently borne for the sake of God and country. He was ready to be offered up, and to leave even his loved family, at the call of duty. His flesh rests in hope; his spirit rose to God. I recall gratefully an interview in the same house (Major McClean's) with the sweet-spirited and gallant Captain Lee, of Richmond. "How glad I am," said he, as he gave me a cordial grasp, "to shake the hand of a brother in Christ!" I referred with sympathy to his intense suffering. With emphasis he answered, "O, they are nothing to the sufferings which Jesus bore for me!" In a few days he too was in the bosom of his Father. There rises before me a vision of

the sweet face of Rev. Dabney Carr Harrison, who reminded all his friends of the disciple whom Jesus loved. He was of a gentle, retiring, affectionate disposition, fond of home and friends, and to feed the flock of Christ. No one seemed less fitted for the rude scenes of deadly strife; no one cared less for the pomp and parade of the military profession. Yet in the hour of his country's peril, he girded on the sword and commanded a company that honored him as their captain and as a man of God. Over their morals and souls he watched with a pastor's care, while he neglected not to train them as soldiers and inspirit them to resist the foe. At Fort Donelson he fell, sword in hand, in front of his company, cheering them to the charge; and with his dying voice rang out the war-cry, "Never surrender!" Neither the church he adorned for years, nor the company he formed at the start of hostilities, nor the regiment of which he was Major at the time of his death, will soon forget John Stewart Walker. His character was complete in christian graces; his life was fruitful in good works; the influence of his example and exhortation survives in the city of Richmond and with the soldiers he commanded. Warned of the peril to which he exposed himself, but persuaded that duty called, he advanced for observation in front of his regiment, and fell in death during the memorable struggle of Malvern Hill. I must not forget an old friend and college-mate, of refined character and cultivated mind, a private in the ranks, John Moody, who died of a wound received in the same engagement. His brother, with a pained heart, told him that his leg must be amputated. A sweet and placid smile was on his face as he replied, "Well, I entered the army from a sense of duty, and do not object to the loss of a limb in the service of my country." A few days later his brother informed him that he must die. With the same seraphic calm of countenance and cheerful tones of voice, he said, "It is well. I am a soldier from the conviction of duty, and willing to offer my life a sacrifice to the cause of my country and my God." I will close this list of some of the worthy dead of our army whom I myself knew, with the name of that lamented young officer, Gen. Garland, who stood so high in the esteem of our chief Generals, and bade fair to attain the loftiest distinction. He was my class-mate at college, afterwards my colonel. I was not with him in his last days, but

I remember well his habits of prayer and of the reverent reading of the scriptures in camp, the modest suggestion of his readiness to co-operate with me in every effort to promote the spiritual interests of his regiment, and the deep pity he expressed for the soldier who encountered the perils of a campaign without hope of a blessed immortality. He did his duty for conscience sake, in the fear of God. Fellow-soldier, would you not be glad to emulate the piety of these men, and to die their death?

Will you attend now, while I urge some valid reasons why the soldier, above other men, ought to be a christian?

1. *In order to secure the blessing of Almighty God on our arms.*

I assume your faith in the great truth that "God is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." We have solemnly recognized God in the Constitution of these Confederate States. The acts of our Congress and the proclamations of our President have acknowledged him. With wonderful unanimity, with profound emotion, our people have observed days of fasting to avert his righteous wrath, days of thanksgiving to glorify his name for timely succor and glorious victories. Not as a mere form, not with words of studied and frigid grace to round a period, but in evident sincerity and fervor, our Generals have expressed their trust in divine guidance, and attributed their brilliant successes to his favor. "Our gratitude to God for his mercies rises higher every day," wrote Lee after the second battle of Manassas. In his more recent dispatch which briefly announced the repulse of Burnside at Fredericksburg, "Thanks be to God!" bursts forth from the fullness of a grateful heart. Deep in the breasts of our soldiery and civilians rests the conviction that the Lord of hosts, the God of battles, the Ruler of the nations, is on our side, and that in this fact lies our safety against all the craft and all the power of the Northern army. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." "Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another." We can appeal with candor and confidence to God in behalf of our cause, because it is worthy.—

Oppression, robbery, bloodshed, we do not desire, but deprecate. We would injure no man. We fight for liberty, independence, safety, honor—for these broad and fruitful lands, for institutions that have come down to us from our fathers, for our homes and children and God's own truth. We are for peace; but they are for war. The righteousness of this self-defence on our part, however, is not sufficient by itself to secure for us divine help from trouble. God may have a controversy with us. He may use that mad people as the rod of his anger to chastise us long and sorely. "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." What avail will be all our fastings and thanksgivings, if they are unaccompanied by repentance and turning to the Lord? In several of his orders Washington reprov'd his army for their profanity and other sins, and asked how they could expect God to crown their arms with success, while they daily blasphemed his name. Look at the crimes and impiety of our army, and ask yourself the question whether we do not deserve the heavy judgments of Heaven. If we were a God-fearing army; if officers and privates worshipped and obeyed him; if with earnest and persevering cries we besought him, the God of justice, the God of mercy, to guide us to wise counsels, to inspire us with steadiness and valor, to break the ranks of the foe, and beat them to pieces small as the dust before the wind; if after every success our joy arose in songs and shouts to God who had triumphed gloriously—would we not be, indeed, an irresistible power? Let us henceforth lift up our banners in the name of the Lord, and do valiantly.—How soon then may God crush the numerous hosts of the enemy, or turn his heart to peace, or raise us up friends among other nations.

2. Because the life and power of godliness are needed to preserve you from the immorality and utter irreligion to which temptations abound in the camps.

Much has been said and written about the demoralizing influence of the war on our people, and especially on our army. Soldiers and their friends have sometimes been offended by the sweeping charges of looseness in morals which have been brought against our troops. They have protested against them as unkind and unjust. I do not wonder that they have felt

keenly this reproach. Our army does not consist of hirelings, of the scum of society. In it are largely represented all respectable classes of the community, and also the church of God. Never before was there so much of intellectual, social, moral worth in any body of troops. The accusation cannot be sustained against these men that they have thrown off the restraints of conscience, religion, decency, honor. If it were true, we should bid farewell to our hopes of prosperity and renown for this Confederacy; for society would be rotten to its very core. But setting aside these extravagant statements, we must still confess, with shame and sorrow and trembling, the injurious influence of their mode of life on our soldiery. Who has not seen—who will not own it? They have given up the care of their pastors, the fellowship of their christian brethren, the stated services of the sanctuary, the hallowed influences of home and of female society. They are not subject, as formerly, to the control of public sentiment; they are not occupied in the steady pursuits of industry. It is not strange that they should cast off the fear of God, and seek pleasure in vices which once they abhorred. Even the standard of truth and honesty has been fearfully lowered by many who had been good citizens, or are the children of our most honorable men. Gambling, licentiousness and drinking are very seductive in camp. Profane and lewd conversation abounds. Often military duties employ the whole Sabbath, and in many regiments there is no chaplain to conduct public worship and preach the word of eternal life. Therefore iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. There is a great falling off from piety and good morals. Men forget their Creator, and lose the sense of religion. Comrade, have you not felt this tendency to ungodliness—perhaps, also, to vice? You, perhaps, are the child of many prayers. You early knelt at a mother's knees, and learned from her lips to lisped a prayer. You have been trained amid religious influences. Once you had a tender conscience and keen susceptibility to the appeals of the Bible. Has not that conscience been blinded and blunted? Has not that heart hardened? Are you not far gone from God? This is with you a precious season of life. You are still young. Your nature is plastic and is taking shape; soon it will be rock. You may be a ruined man in character, in morals, in soul, before the close of the

war. Your safeguard is in the experience and practice of religion. Though many christians have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience in the army, others have stood fast, and will come forth out of the furnace purified like gold. King Saul and Judas fell away, and were never recovered; David and Peter were overcome by temptation, but repented and were restored; Joseph in Potiphar's house, Daniel and the three Hebrew children at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, retained their fidelity against seductions and violence. The believer in Christ is changed and purified in his very soul; he is strengthened by the Holy Spirit; he is inspired by the loftiest motives and hopes. You may not enjoy many religious privileges; but God is a Spirit, and asks a worship in spirit and truth. No external circumstances can keep you from seeking God in humble, contrite, believing prayer. Carry your testament in your pocket, and consult its pages daily. Even in camp, on the march, in the array of battle, you may be a true disciple of Christ, and grow in grace and knowledge.

3. *Because amid the privations and sufferings of the soldier there is peculiar need of the rich consolations of religion.*

You know the hardships of the soldier. Your food is coarse and often scanty; it is almost impossible to keep a sufficient supply of clothes and blankets; you suffer from exposure to all kinds of weather; your duties are dull and wearisome; you miss the comforts of home, and are heart-sick with longing to see again the loved ones from whom you have been so long absent. These evils you can bear in health and vigor, but how your spirits sink when they are aggravated by sickness, whether in camp or in hospital. Then you have strength neither of body nor mind to resist gloom and melancholy; you pine for the sweet tones and gentle ministries of wife, mother, sister—for all the inexpressible blessedness of home. Comrade, you may have an ever present friend in God. He will be to you a father, and you shall be his son. Jesus will be to you a brother, and nearer than a brother. The consolations of grace are independent of external situation; rather they abound as sufferings abound. Penitent for sin, but trusting in the cross, you will have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Careful for nothing with tormenting fear, but making your requests known unto God in prayer, you will have the peace of God which passeth all understanding to keep

your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. The hope of heaven will be to your spirit an anchor sure and steadfast. A well-spring of holy joy will open in your heart, and its living waters will gush forth freely forever. Your meditation of God will be sweet. He will be with you as you walk your solitary beat on guard and picket. He will watch by your side as you lie on your lowly bed. He will be with you in trouble, and make all your bed in sickness. Though every other friend be absent, and every other help fail, God will be the strength of your heart and your portion forever.

4. *Because you are exposed to imminent peril of sudden death.*

Life with us all is short and uncertain. The very means men take to guard against death may prove fatal. A few days ago from the time I am writing, a soldier was returning to camp with a substitute, and by the running off of the cars was hurled instantly into eternity. "In the midst of life we are in death." But the soldier has peculiar perils both by disease and battle. How often is he hurried to the grave without warning, either by fierce disease or by the shot of the foe. In the most literal sense, there is frequently but a step betwixt him and death; he feels as he advances to the front of the battle that the next step may take him to death. "And after death the judgment." "The sting of death is sin." Friend, are you prepared to die and appear before God? You are a brave man, I acknowledge; you will stand to your post at all hazards; but do you not tremble and shrink at the sober thought that death is near? Are you willing to rush into eternity with your many crimson sins—with the grievous sin of forgetting your Creator and neglecting the great salvation, unconfessed, unrepented, unforgiven? Are you in a right state of heart for death and the bar of Christ? You may die without sufficient notice even to utter the dying cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "O chaplain, pray for me!" cried a soldier, as he was borne mortally wounded from the battle of Williamsburg. I could only assure him that I was praying for him, and with a word direct him to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. I have talked to many soldiers in extreme illness who turned on me a vacant stare, their minds being distracted by fever, or writhed in such agony of body that they could not compose themselves to lie

ten or to pray. Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. The love of God shed abroad in the heart dispels all fear; it delivers those who had all their lifetime been subject to bondage through fear of death. With the witness of acceptance by God through Christ in your heart, you will meet death, swift or lingering, by bullet or disease, at home or abroad, without dread or shuddering. The great Shepherd will go with you through the valley. You will sweetly fall asleep in Jesus. It will matter little where your body shall be buried. Dives had his funeral honors of men; but the beggar Lazarus was borne by angels to Abraham's bosom.

Comrade, I wish to enlist you as my fellow-soldier in a nobler cause than even that of Southern independence. "Fight the good fight of faith." There is no leader comparable to the Captain of our salvation. There is no triumph so sure as the triumph of Jesus over all his foes. There are no rewards so rich as those he gives his faithful soldiers. To-day join this army, and never desert your colors. Though you die, you will live forever. Over your grave comrades will sing, sorrowing, yet not as others who have no hope:

"The pains of death are past,
Labor and sorrow cease;
And life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace.
Soldier of Christ well done!
Praise be thy new employ;
And while eternal ages run,
Rest in thy Saviour's joy."

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